

Amendments to the Claims

Please amend the claims as follows:

Listing of Claims

6. (New) A system for providing an interactive story line having a plurality of routes, wherein a participant assumes the role of a character in the story line, interacts with the story line and affects the progress of the story line, the system comprising:

a system manager that stores information about the story line;

a message from the system manager to the participant that seeks a response by the participant; and

a response by the participant to the message that represents how the participant's character interacts with the story line and that is provided to the system manager;

wherein the system manager progresses the story line along a route based on the participant's response.

7. (New) The system of claim 6, further comprising:

a subsequent message from the system manager to the participant that has content depending on the participant's response and that seeks a subsequent response by the participant; and

a subsequent response by the participant that represents how the participant's character interacts with the content of the subsequent message and that is provided to the system manager;

wherein the system manager further progresses the story line along a route based on the participant's subsequent response.

8. (New) The system of claim 7, further comprising:

a timer that notes when the message is sent to the participant, when the participant reviews the message or when the participant responds to the message;

wherein the system manager sends the subsequent message a certain time after the message is sent to the participant, a certain time after the participant reviews the message, or a certain time after the participant responds to the message.

9. (New) The system of claim 7, further comprising:

additional subsequent messages from the system manager to the participant that have content depending on the participant's prior responses and that seek subsequent responses by the participant; and

additional subsequent responses by the participant that represent how the participant's character interacts with the content of the additional subsequent messages and that are provided to the system manager;

wherein the system manager further progresses the story line along a route to the story line's interim or final conclusion based on the participant's additional subsequent responses.

10. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the message is in the form of an e-mail, video mail, voice mail, instant message, fax or phone message.

11. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the message is in the form of an e-mail containing a hyperlink to a web page, and the participant visits the web page to obtain information about the story line.

12. (New) The system of claim 11, wherein the web page includes a textual, video, graphical or audio description of another character in the story line.

13. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the message is personalized by indicating the participant's real-life name or the participant's real-life address.

14. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the message provided by the system manager is a message from another character in the story line.

15. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the system administrator includes a server.

16. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the message and response between the system manager and participant are exchanged over the Internet.

17. (New) The system of claim 6, wherein the message and response between the system manager and participant are exchanged using wireless communication.

18. (New) The system of claim 6 wherein the story line is educational, erotic, historical or involves espionage.

19. (New) The system of claim 6 wherein the role of the character in the story line assumed by the participant is the participant's real-life identity.

20. (New) The system of claim 11, wherein the web page contains information regarding actual events occurring in reality and fictional information that describes the story line.

21. (New) A method for providing an interactive story line having a plurality of routes, wherein a participant assumes the role of a character in the story line, interacts with the story line and affects the progress of the story line, the method comprising:
storing information about the story line;

sending a message to the participant that seeks a response by the participant;

receiving a response by the participant to the message that represents how the participant's character interacts with the story line; and

progressing the story line along a route based on the participant's response.

22. (New) The method of claim 21, further comprising:

sending a subsequent message to the participant that contains content depending on the participant's response and that seeks a subsequent response by the participant;

receiving a subsequent response by the participant that represents how the participant's character interacts with the content contained in the subsequent message; and

further progressing the story line along a route based on the participant's subsequent response.

23. (New) The system of claim 22, further comprising:

noting when the message is sent to the participant, when the participant reviews the message or when the participant responds to the message; and

sending the subsequent message a certain time after the message is sent to the participant, a certain time after the participant reviews the message, or a certain time after the participant responds to the message.

24. (New) The method of claim 22, further comprising:

sending additional subsequent messages to the participant that have content depending on the participant's prior responses and that seek subsequent responses by the participant;

receiving additional subsequent responses by the participant that represent how the participant's character interacts with the content of the additional subsequent messages; and

further progressing the story line along a route to the story line's interim or final conclusion based on the participant's additional subsequent responses.

25. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein sending the message comprises sending an e-mail, video mail, voice mail, instant message, fax or phone message.

26. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the message is in the form of an e-mail containing a hyperlink to a web page, and the participant visits the web page to obtain information about the story line.

27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the web page includes a textual, video, graphical or audio description of another character in the story line.

28. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the message is personalized by indicating the participant's real-life name or the participant's real-life address.

29. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the message is a message from another character in the story line.

30. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the information about the story line is stored on a server.

31. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the message and response are exchanged over the Internet.

32. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the message and response are exchanged using wireless communication.

33. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the story line is educational, erotic, historical or involves espionage.

34. (New) The method of claim 21, wherein the role of the character in the story line assumed by the participant is the participant's real-life identity.

35. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the web page contains information regarding actual events occurring in reality and fictional information that describes the story line.

36. (New) A system for providing an interactive story line having a plurality of routes, wherein a participant assumes the role of a character in the story line, interacts with the story line and affects the progress of the story line, the system comprising:

a system manager that stores information about the story line;

an informational message from the system manager to the participant that provides information about the story line but that does not seek a response by the participant;

a response-seeking message from the system manager to the participant that seeks a response by the participant; and

a response by the participant to the response-seeking message that represents how the participant's character interacts with the story line and that is provided to the system manager;

wherein the system manager progresses the story line along a route based on the participant's response.

37. (New) A system for providing an interactive story line having a plurality of routes, wherein a participant assumes the role of a character in the story line, interacts with the story line and affects the progress of the story line, the system comprising:

a system manager that stores information about the story line;

a message from the system manager to the participant that seeks a response by the participant;

a response by the participant to the message that represents how the participant's character interacts with the story line and that is provided to the system manager; and

a timer that notes when the message is sent to the participant, when the participant reviews the message or when the participant responds to the message;

wherein the system manager progresses the story line along a route by sending a subsequent message to the participant, the subsequent message having content based on the participant's response, and being sent a certain time after the message was sent to the participant, a certain time after the participant reviewed the message, or a certain time after the participant responded to the message.

38. (New) The system of claim 37, wherein the system manager tracks the participant's location in the story line by noting when the message was sent to the participant, when the message was reviewed by the participant, or when the message was responded to by the participant.

39. (New) A system for providing an interactive story line, wherein a participant assumes the role of a character in the story line, interacts with the story line and affects the progress of the story line, the system comprising:

a system manager that stores information about the story line, including information about a plurality of possible routes that the story line may take as a result of the participant's interaction with the story line;

a plurality of messages from the system manager to the participant, wherein at least some of the messages are response-seeking messages; and

a plurality of responses by the participant to the response-seeking messages that are provided to the system manager, the plurality of responses representing how the participant's character interacts with the story line;

wherein the system manager progresses the story line along one of the plurality of possible routes stored by the system manager, the route being dependent on at least some of the participant's responses.

40. (New) A system for providing an interactive story line, wherein a participant assumes the role of a character in the story line, interacts with the story line and affects the progress of the story line, the system comprising:

a system manager that stores information about the story line, including information about a plurality of possible routes that the story line may take as a result of the participant's interaction with the story line;

a plurality of messages from the system manager to the participant, wherein at least some of the messages are response-seeking messages, and at least one message includes a web page containing information regarding actual events occurring in reality and fictional information that describes the story line; and

• a plurality of responses by the participant to the response-seeking
messages that are provided to the system manager, the plurality of responses
representing how the participant's character interacts with the story line;

wherein the system manager progresses the story line along one of the
plurality of possible routes stored by the system manager, the route being dependent on
at least some of the participant's responses.